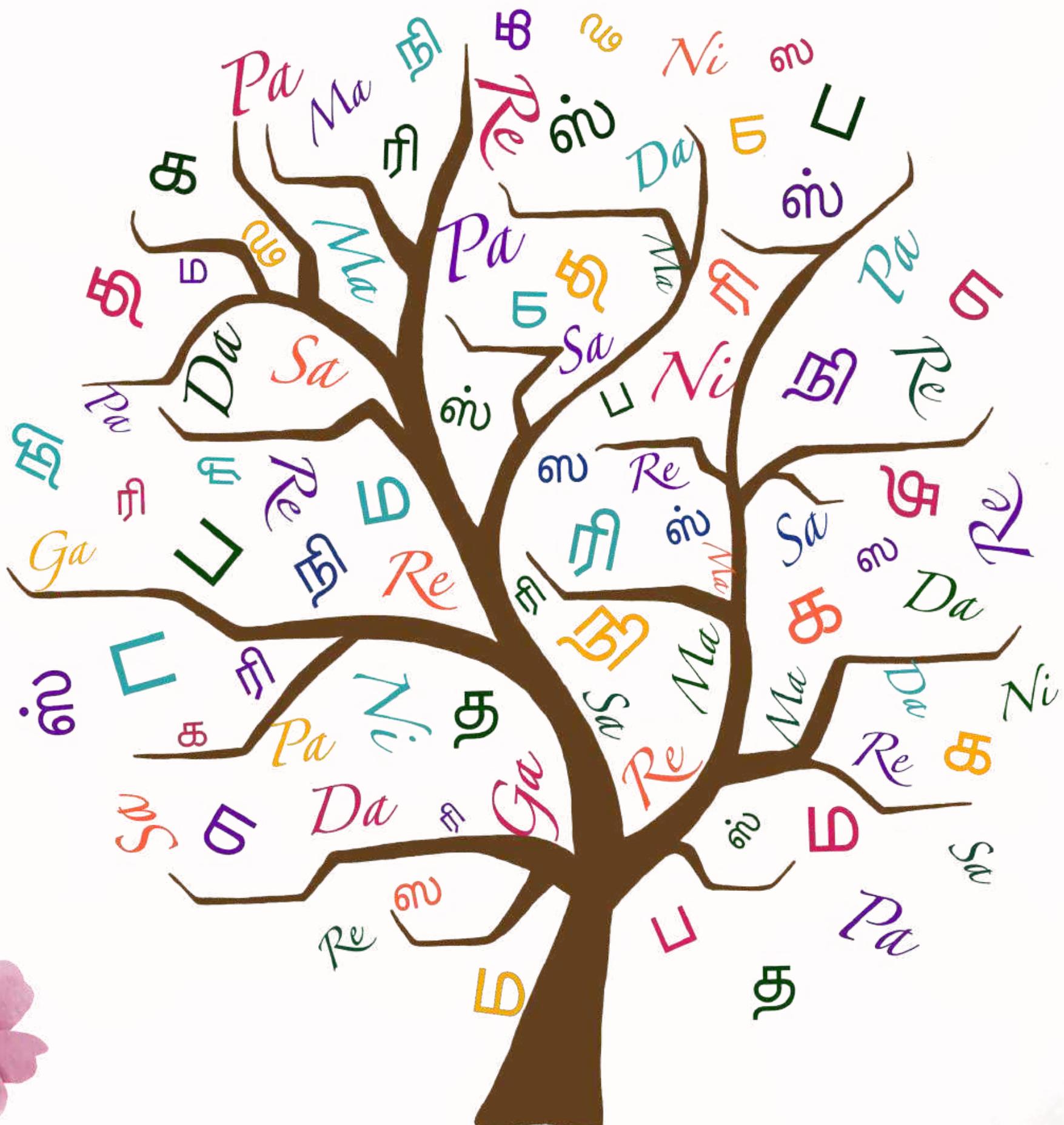




Swaraa and Thaala

Cultural Academy®

Rhythm. Melody. Legacy





Carnatic Music Handbook

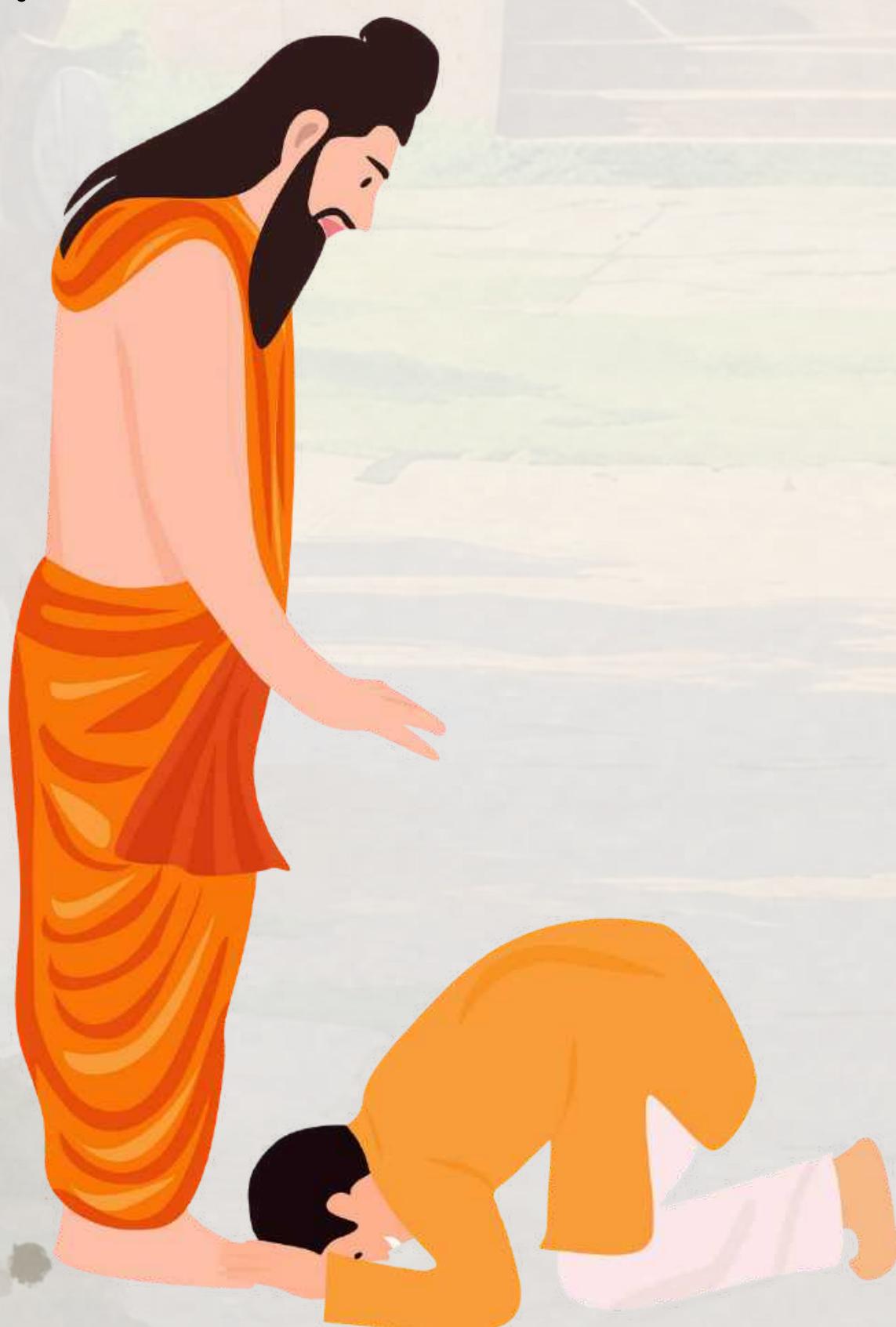


@swaraa.and.thaalaa



A Guru

In Carnatic music classes, students commence with the salutation "**Shree Gurubhyo Namaha**" expressing reverence to their gurus and the sacred teaching tradition. In return, the guru bestows the blessing "**Sukhee Bhava**," invoking happiness and well-being for the students in both their musical pursuits and personal lives.



Purandaradāsā



The Father of Carnatic Music -
Purandaradāsā (1484-1564) was a saint, poet and composer from Karnātakā.

- **His Gift to Us** - A simple step-by-step path to learn Carnatic music (Sarali, Jantai, Alankāram, Geetham) that all beginners learn even today.
- Geethams like Lambodara, which children still sing.
- A strong base that later allowed the Trinity to create masterpieces.

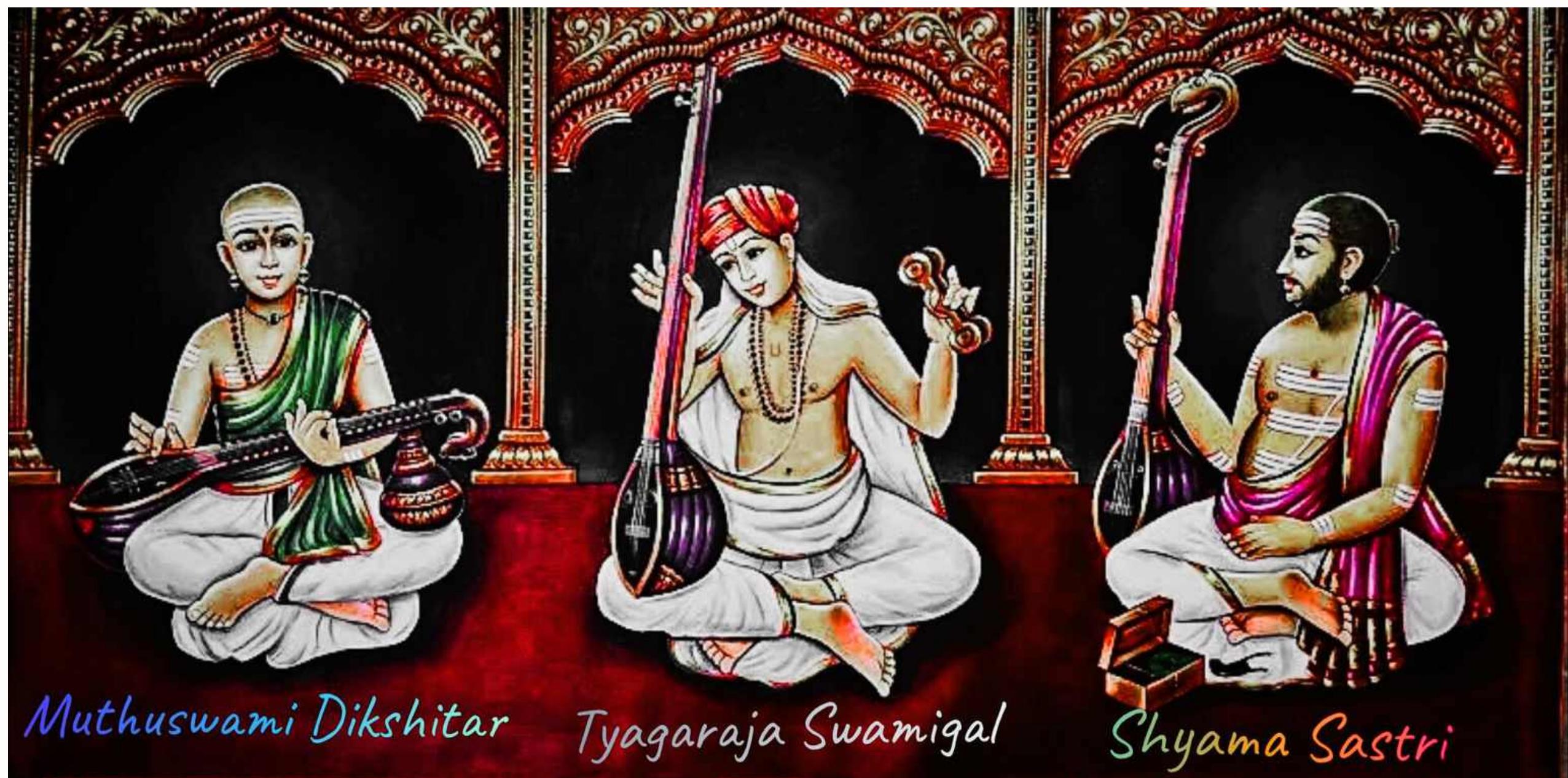
He composed lakhs of songs in Kannadā, most in simple language, full of devotion to Lord Krishna and Vitthala. He used music to spread bhakti (devotion) and moral values.

ā - pronounced as aa

The Trinity of Carnatic Music

Who?

- Thyagarājā (1767-1847) → songs full of devotion
- Muthuswamy Dikshithar (1775-1835) → temple and Sanskrit-based songs
- Śyāmā Sāstri (1762-1827) → rhythm & Goddess devotion



ā - pronounced as aa; Ś - pronounced as sh ;

Sitting posture

- Sit cross-legged on the floor, Keep back straight, shoulders relaxed and hands on knees.
- Good posture = better breathing, clear voice, less strain.
- For online exam, Use bigger screens (laptop/iPad). Avoid mobiles if possible.
- If using mobile, keep it on a stand at eye level - not on the floor and 2-3 feet away.
- Sit in a well-lit place, face the light.



Introduction to Beginners' Lessons

Sarali Varisai

The word 'Sarali' means Simple, and 'Varisai' means sequences

- Sing up (Ārohanam) and down (Avarohanam)
- Ārohanam: sa ri ga ma pa dha ni SA
- Avarohanam: SA ni dha pa ma ga ri sa
- Helps you learn Swarās, Shruthi and Thālam.
- Raagam: Mayāmālavagowla
- Thālam: Aadhi (8 beats)

Practice in 3 speeds:

1st speed: 1 Swarā per beat

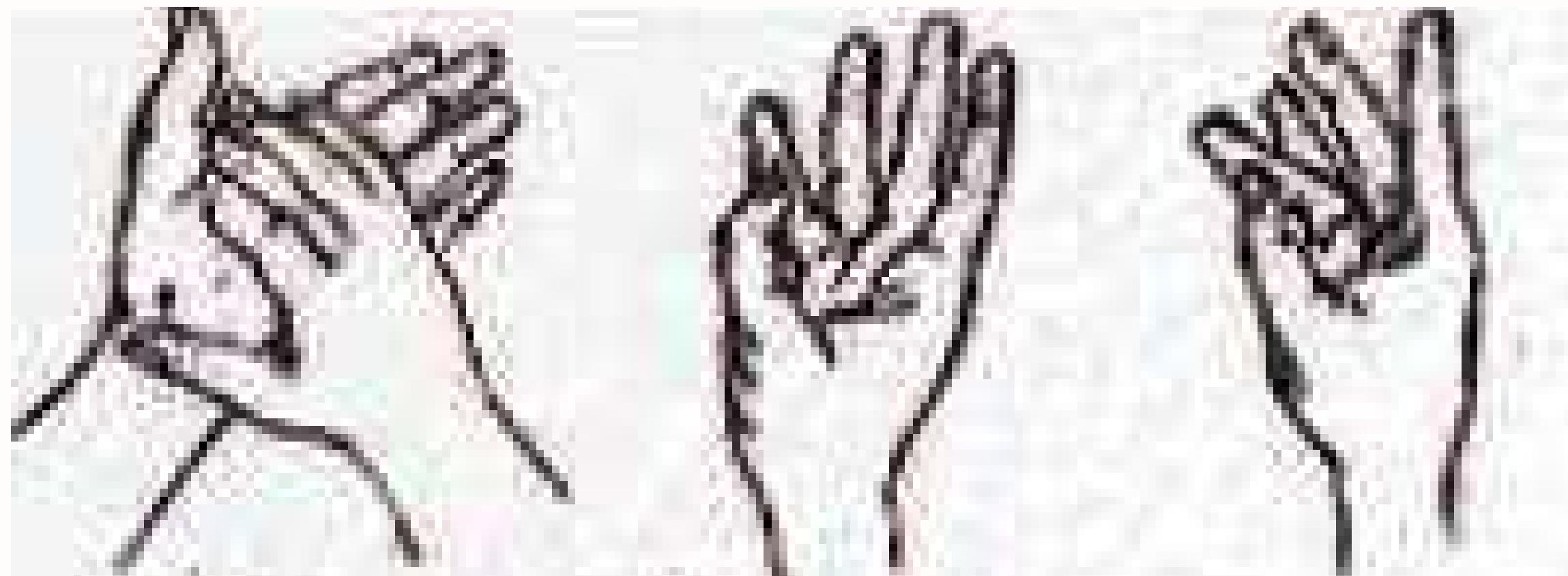
2nd speed: 2 Swarās per beat

3rd speed: 4 Swarās per beat



ā - pronounced as aa

Aadhi Thālam



1



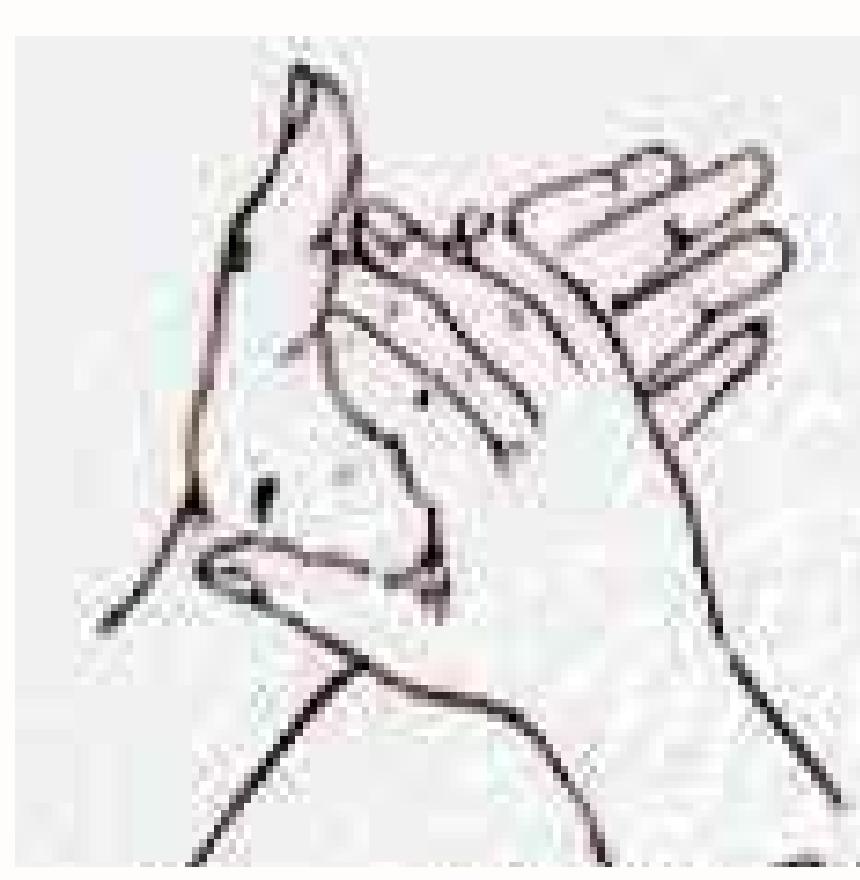
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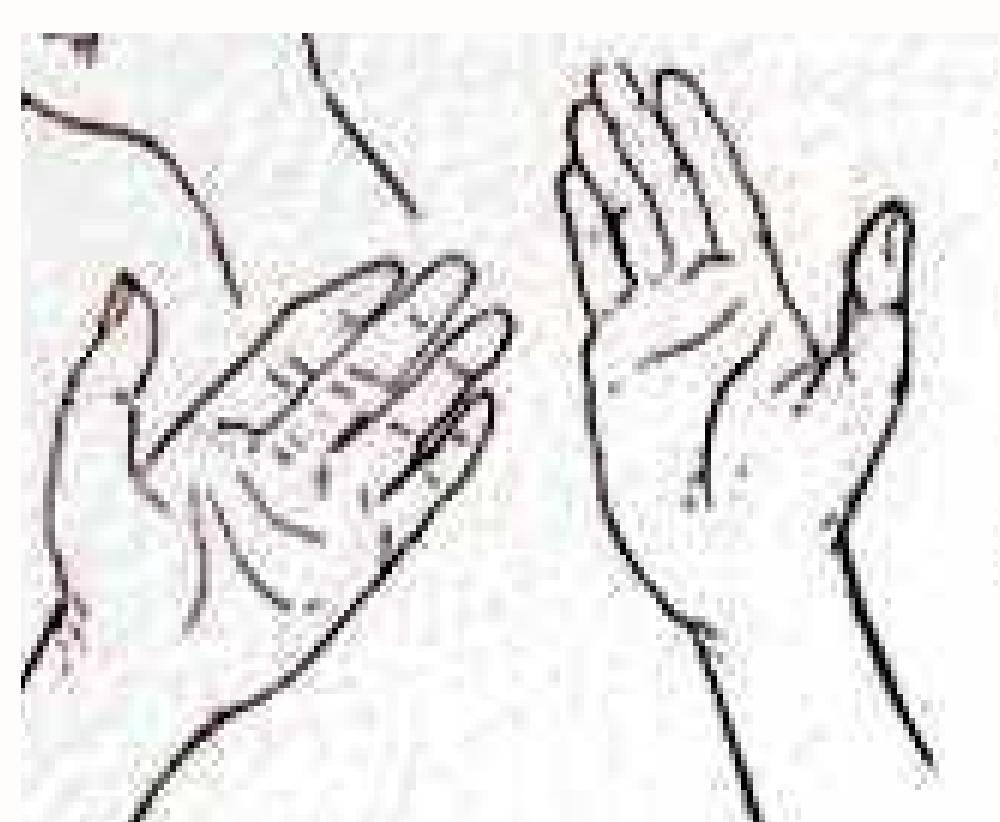
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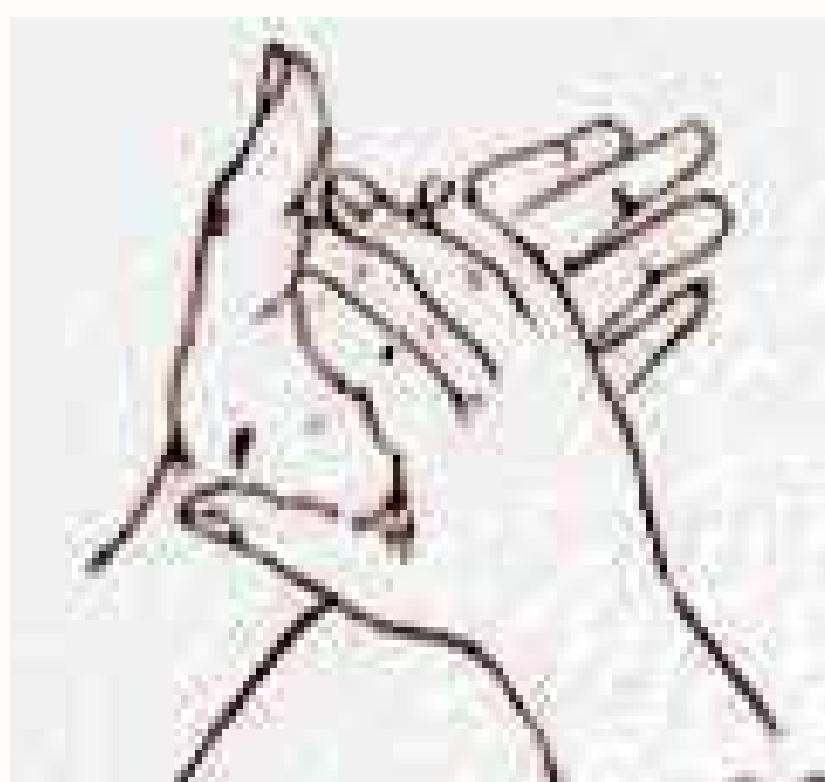
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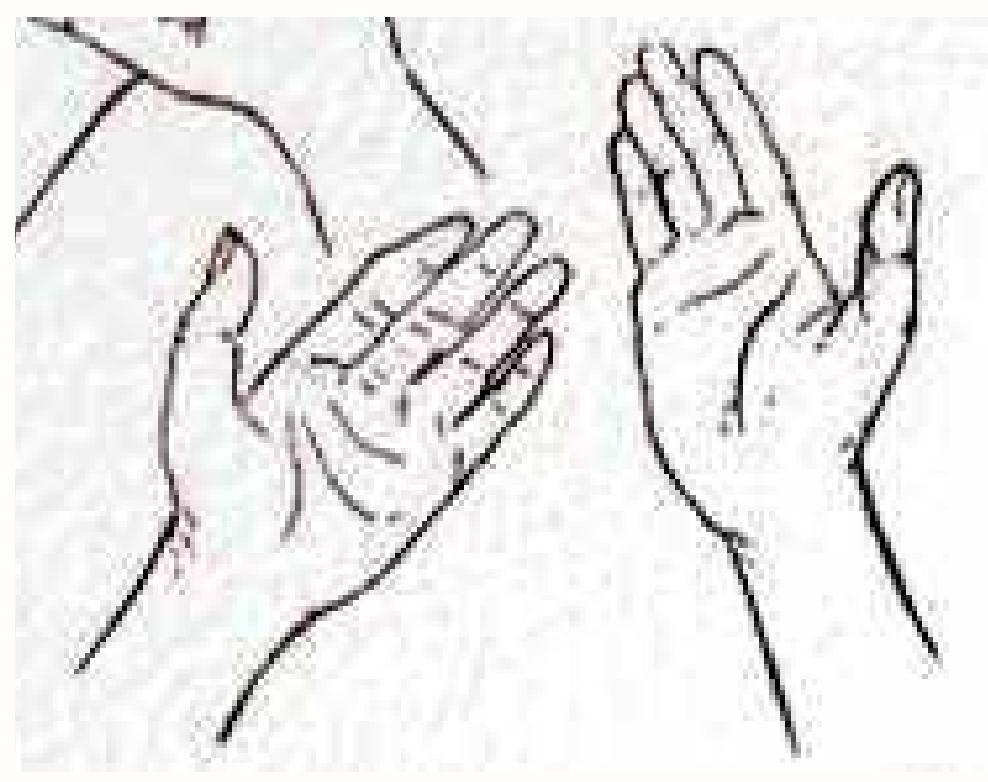
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7

Jantai Varisai



Double Note Exercises

- Each Swarā is sung twice (Sa Sa, Ri Ri, Ga Ga etc)
- The second Swarā is stronger - it builds your voice strength.
- Practice in 3 speeds with Aadhi Thālam.
- Practice notes in aa-kaaram. (Like, aa aa, aa aa, aa aa - 7 Swarās)

Practice in 3 speeds:

- 1st speed: 2 Swarā per beat
- 2nd speed: 4 Swarās per beat
- 3rd speed: 8 Swarās per beat

ā - pronounced as aa

Dhāttu Varisai

- The term Dhāttu means Jumping.
- Jump across Swarās (like Sa-Ma, Ri-Pa).
- This makes your voice flexible and quick.
- Always follow Ārohanam – Avarohanam order.

Practise in 3 speeds and aa-kaaram:

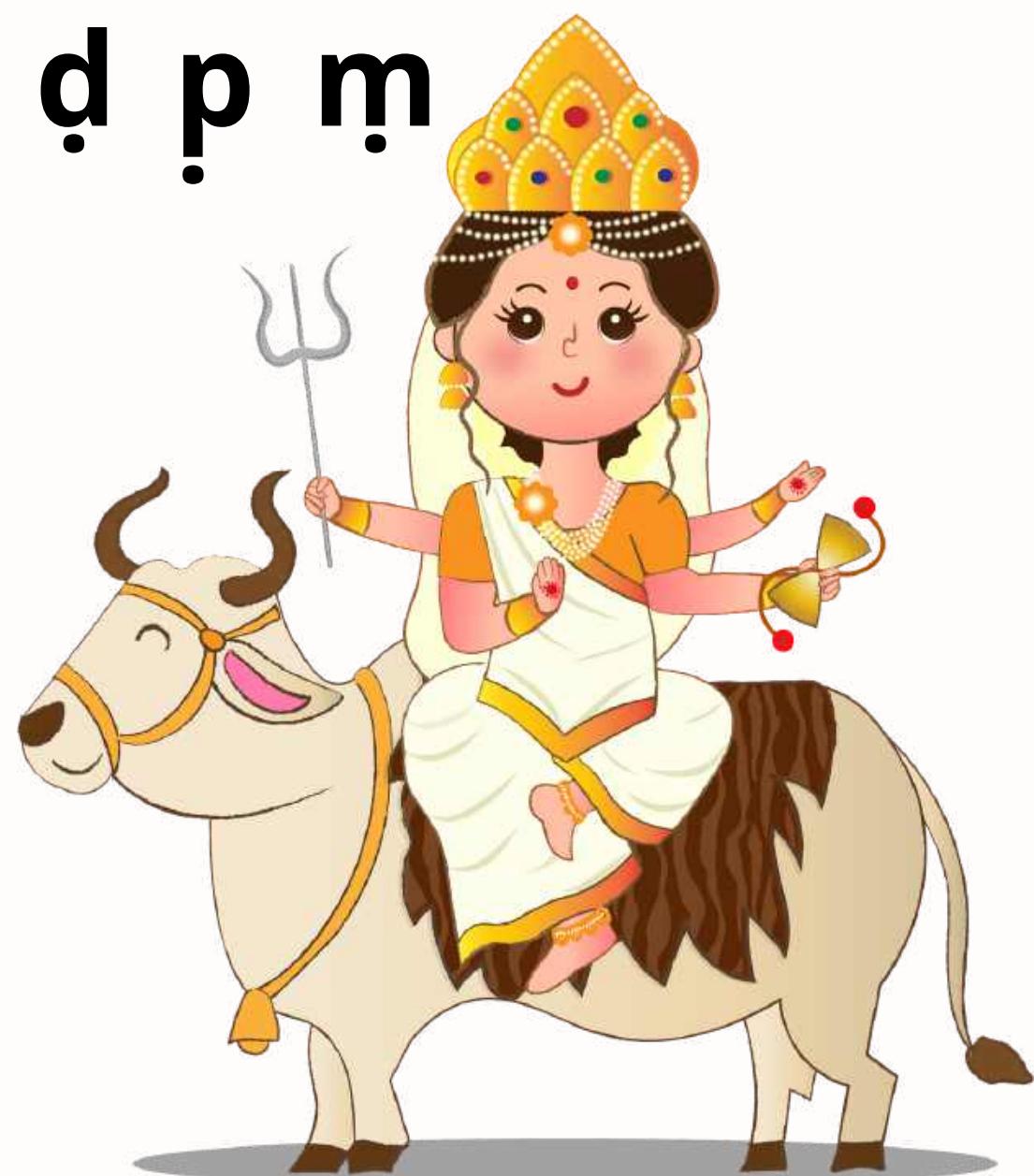
- 1st speed: 1 Swarā per beat
- 2nd speed: 2 Swarās per beat
- 3rd speed: 4 Swarās per beat



ā - pronounced as aa

Mandhra Sthāyi Varisai

- The term 'Mandhra Sthāyi' means lower octave, and 'Varisai' means sequences.
- Focuses on lower octave Swarā practice.
- Helps strengthen the voice in the lower register.
- Develops shruthi alignment, depth, and stability.
- The notes of lower octave are denoted with a dot below the Swarās like s ḥ ḍ ḡ ḡ



ā - pronounced as aa

Thāra Sthāyi Varisai

- The term 'Thāra Sthāyi' means higher octave, and 'Varisai' means sequences.
- Focuses on upper octave Swarā practice.
- Helps strengthen the voice in the higher register.
- Develops shruthi alignment, depth, and stability.
- The notes of upper octave are denoted with a dot above the Swarās like Š Ḙ Ḡ Ḍ Ḍ ḍ



ā - pronounced as aa

Alankārams

- Saptha Thāla Alankārams
- Patterns in 7 Thālams
- Combines Swarās with different Thālams.
- Helps you keep rhythm strong.
- Practice all 5 Jāthis of laghu.



ā - pronounced as aa

12 Swarasthānam



1. Shadjam (Sa) - Fixed note
2. Shuddha Rishabham (R_1)
3. Chatushruthi Rishabham (R_2)/
Shuddha Gandharam (G_1)
4. Sādhāraṇa Gandharam (G_2)/
Shatshruthi Rishabam (R_3)
5. Antara Gandharam (G_3)
6. Shuddha Madhyamam (M_1)
7. Prathi Madhyamam (M_2)
8. Panchamam (Pa) - Fixed note
9. Shuddha Dhaivatham (D_1)
10. Chatushruthi Dhaivatham (D_2)/
Shuddha Nishādham (N_1)
11. Kaishiki Nishādham (N_2)/
Shatshruthi Dhaivatham (D_3)
12. Kākaṇi Nishādham (N_3)

!- pronounced as LL; ɳ - pronounced as nn; ā - pronounced as aa



Expand Your Carnatic Music Skills

Early Compositions

- **Geetham** - Simple song with Swarās and lyrics, no sangathis.
- **Sanchari Geetham** - Slightly advanced geetham with multiple sections.
- **Lakshana Geetham** - A geetham that explains rāgā rules in lyrics.
- **Swarājathi** - Blend of Swarās and lyrics, with expressive scope.
- **Jathiswaram** - Swarā only composition (no lyrics), with strong rhythm.
- **Varṇam** - A comprehensive piece combining Swarās and Sāhithyam; introduces sangathis.



ī - pronounced as ee; ḷ - pronounced as nn

Concert Compositions



- **Kriti / Kīrthanam** - The core Carnatic composition with Pallavi, Anupallavi, and Charanam (Eg, *Vatapi Ganapathim*)
- **Chittaiswaram** - Pre-composed Swarā passage within a kriti.
- **Padham** - Slow, expressive composition highlighting bhāvā (emotion).
- **Jāvāli** - Light classical composition, playful in nature.
- **Thillānā** - Energetic rhythmic piece, often sung at the end of concerts.
- **Śloka / Viruttham** - Free-flowing verse in rāgā, without strict Thālā.
- **Rāgamālikā** - Composition that uses multiple rāgās.

Ś - pronounced as sh; ī - pronounced as ee; ā - pronounced as aa

Concert Compositions

- **Divyanāma Kīrtanam** - Simple devotional songs (e.g., Thyāgarāja).
- **Uthsava Sampradāya Kīrthanam** - Songs for festive occasions.
- **Mangalam** - Closing piece of a concert (auspicious ending).



ī - pronounced as ee; ā - pronounced as aa

Manōdharma

Creative Improvisation.



- **Rāgā Ālāpanā** - Free exploration of a rāgā, without Thālā.
- **Thānam** - Rhythmic development of rāgā, part of RTP.
- **Niraval** - Improvisation of a chosen lyrical line within Thālā.
- **Kalpanā Swaram** - Improvised swarā passages, sung with Thālā.
- **Rāgam-Thānam-Pallavi (RTP)** - Advanced improvisation combining rāgā, rhythm, and creativity.
- **Graha Bhedam / Śruti Bhedam** - Shifting tonic note (sa) to another Swarā, producing a new rāgā.

Ś - pronounced as sh; ā - pronounced as aa

Rhythm & Percussion



- **Thāni Āvartanā** - Percussion solo during a concert.
- **Kōrvai** - Complex rhythmic ending sequence, often in 3 cycles.
- **Mōra** - Repeated rhythmic phrase (usually 3 times) in percussion.
- **Nadais** - Subdivisions of Thāla (tisra-3, chatusra-4, khanda-5, misra-7, sankīrna-9).
- **Eduppu** - The starting point of a song in relation to Thālā cycle.
- **Arudi** - A resting/emphasis point in Thālā, esp. in varnams.
- **Sollu / Konnakol** - Vocal recitation of percussion syllables.

ō - pronounced as oh; ī- pronounced as ee; ā - pronounced as aa

Terminologies



- **Pallavi** - The opening line or theme of a composition, usually repeated.
- **Anupallavi** - The second section of a kriti, following the pallavi.
- **Charaṇam** - The longer, concluding part of a kriti with more lyrics.
- **MukThāyi Swaram** - A Swarā passage in varṇams that leads into the charaṇam.
- **Charaṇa Swaram** - Swarā passages sung after the charaṇam in varṇams.
- **Upapallavi** - Another term for anupallavi.



ṇ - pronounced as nn; ā - pronounced as aa

- **Pūrvāṅga-Uttarāṅga** - The two halves of a rāgā scale (Sa-Ma and Pa-Sa).
- **Mātrā** - The smallest time unit in Thāla (like a beat).
- **Kalai** - The speed/multiplication of Thāla (1 kalai, 2 kalai, etc.).
- **Āvarta / Āvartanā** - One complete cycle of Thālā.
- **Viruttam** - A verse sung in free rhythm before a song.
- **Mangalam** - The short, auspicious song sung at the end of a performance.
- **Śruti Box / Tambūrā** - Instrument (or app) used to provide the drone/pitch.



ū - pronounced as oo; Ś - pronounced as sh; ā - pronounced as aa

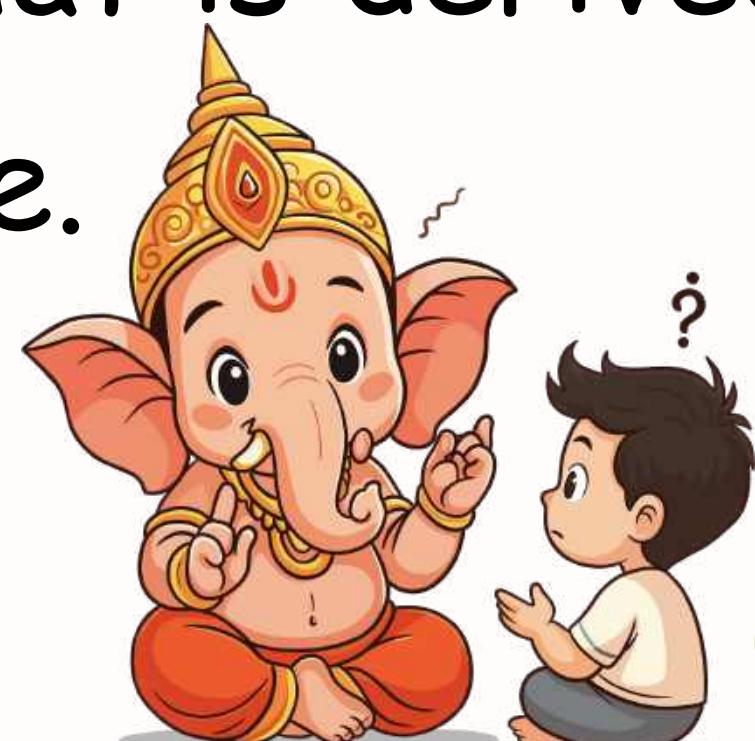
- **Rāgam:** The melody or tune, like a special recipe using specific notes to create a mood.
- **Gamakā:** The unique wiggles and slides between notes that give a rāgam its special flavor.
- **Layā:** The steady rhythm and pulse.

Rhythmic Speeds (Kālam)

- Vilambita/Chowka Kālam: Slow tempo.
- Madhya Kālam: Medium tempo.
- Drutha Kālam: Fast tempo.

Rāgam Scales

- **Melakarthā:** The 72 parent rāgās.
- **Janya Rāgā:** A rāgā that is derived from a Melakarthā scale.



ā - pronounced as aa



Sing a little every day,
Music will guide your way.
With patience, love, and a happy heart,
You're already a musical work of art!



With love,
Aadharshini Madhanagopal

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